

NO DISCRIMINATION IN HEALTH CARE

(Mr. PERLMUTTER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. PERLMUTTER. Mr. Speaker, today, much of the conversation is about the health care system. It's a very personal matter to me, as it is to every man, woman and child in American. I have a daughter with epilepsy. She is not insurable. We have a system in place today that denies her coverage, that excludes her from coverage. That's wrong, and it's probably unconstitutional under the 14th Amendment to the United States Constitution.

There should not be discrimination in health care. There shouldn't be denial of coverage because of a pre-existing condition. We need to change the system that exists so that there is coverage for all Americans with chronic illness and the like.

The bill that we have in Congress will change that coverage, ladies and gentlemen, and I urge its passage.

□ 1015

SOCIAL SECURITY EXECS HAVE FUN AT THE BILTMORE HOTEL

(Mr. POE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, Social Security Administration executives recently enjoyed a luxury retreat at the expense of the American taxpayer. They flew 700 of their managers to the picture perfect, swanky Arizona Biltmore Hotel for what they called "organizational training."

It cost the taxpayers \$750,000. These bureaucrats enjoyed golf, musical entertainment, dancing, skits, catered food, cocktails and even a casino night. Sounds like a vacation for the rich and famous.

Meanwhile, seniors are worried about even getting their monthly Social Security checks.

There was a near riot when taxpayers found out AIG spent half that amount for their luxury retreat by using taxpayer bailout money. But the Social Security spokesman, Peter Spencer dismissed the comparison with AIG by saying, Well, it's different taxpayer money. I'm glad he cleared that up for us.

The arrogance of the Social Security execs to be jet-setting around the country, going to a luxury spa, and then making people paying into Social Security pick up the \$750,000 tab is disgraceful. I guess the spendacrats never heard of teleconferencing or even the Motel 6.

And that's just the way it is.

THE PUBLIC HEALTH INSURANCE OPTION—CONTROLLING SKYROCKETING HEALTH CARE COSTS

(Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, yesterday we had the historic introduction of our health reform act. This bill is going to fundamentally improve care for Americans, for people that have insurance but also for people that don't.

Importantly, this legislation includes a robust public health insurance option. The cost of health care insurance is just too high for people that have it and businesses that are paying for it, and the public health insurance option is going to be one of our most effective ways to bring the cost of insurance down.

Don't take my word for it. Take a study by the Commonwealth Fund that shows that premiums for individuals can be reduced by 25 percent by the pressure put on private insurers by a public health insurance option. That's why studies show that 70 percent to 80 percent of Americans want the option to purchase a public insurance option because it will lower their costs, both as individuals and as employees of businesses throughout this country who are paying far too much for health care.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage us to take a serious look at a very, very important health care bill that's been introduced before us.

DEMOCRAT HEALTH REFORM

(Mr. GINGREY of Georgia asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GINGREY of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, yesterday House Democratic leadership held a press conference to introduce their health care reform legislation. As a physician who has practiced medicine for more than 30 years, I have major concerns that this plan will ultimately put a government bureaucrat in between patients and their doctors and eventually lead to a one-size-fits-all health care system where the government decide what treatments are necessary for patients. When money gets tight, this leads to rationing of care and long waiting lists for patients. We've already seen the pilot of this program. It's called TennCare. Just ask the Democratic governor of Tennessee what it's done to the budget in their State.

I want to read just a sentence of testimony from a Canadian doctor who has seen firsthand the consequences of a single-payer system on his patients.

"What we have in Canada is access to a government state-mandated wait list. And the wait lists are long, the patients are languishing and suffering on wait lists. Our own Supreme Court of Canada has stated that patients are actually dying as they wait for care in Canada."

Mr. Speaker, this is not the sort of health care reform that the American people want or need.

MENTAL HEALTH PARITY IN HEALTH CARE REFORM

(Mr. KENNEDY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. Speaker, anyone ever heard the expression, "the proof is in the pudding"? Well, when the private health insurance companies found out that there may not be a government option, you know what happened to the health insurance stocks on Wall Street? They went through the roof. Profits skyrocketed because, you know why? The health insurance companies make money off of the consumers when they don't have competition, when they're able to cut your health care and make profits out of denying you health insurance. That's how the private marketplace makes money, by denying you health care. They only want to cover the healthy and well.

We have the government option, the public option, to guarantee the American people that they get the health care that they paid for. ***

We're on the side of the American people. We want to protect the people so that they can get their health care, irrespective of a preexisting health care condition.

I'm proud that this health care plan covers all preexisting conditions, including mental health parity as covered by the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act that was passed and signed by President Bush.

MR. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, the words were just said that the Republicans, pointing over here, are bought and paid for. I would ask that those words be taken down.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Members will suspend. The gentleman from Rhode Island has taken a seat.

The Clerk will report the words.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. Speaker, I did not mean to impugn the reputation of any individual Member. I was merely speaking about the party that was representing the insurance companies.

I ask unanimous consent to withdraw the words.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Rhode Island?

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, I withdraw my request that the words be taken down since they are withdrawn and I appreciate my friend doing so.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the words are withdrawn.

There was no objection.

DON'T HURT LOW-WAGE EARNERS

(Mr. GOHMERT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. GOHMERT. I know we have disagreements on some of these issues and I know what the intent is of the Democratic-proposed health care bill. And I know the intent is not to hurt the lower-wage earner. But this bill that's